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I.—*Remarks on M. SCHLEGEL's objections to the restored editions of the Alif Leilah, or Arabian Nights' Entertainments. By HENRY TORRENS, Esq. B. A. and of the Inner Temple, B. C. S.*

At the time of the purchase of the Macan MS. by Mr. BROWNLOW, several of the most distinguished Arabic scholars in this part of India registered in this journal their opinion of its value. The style of the language was declared to be singularly pure, the narrative spirited and graphic, and the collection of stories enriched with many tales either perfectly new to European readers, or else given in a form very different from that under which they have been hitherto known, garbled and abridged by the carelessness of translators, or by imperfection of the MSS. whence they were translated. Since the publication of the opinions above alluded to, a letter addressed by Mons. DE SCHLEGEL to Mons. le Baron DE SACY, upon the subject of the thousand and one nights, has excited some attention in *Calcutta*, with reference especially to the supposed excellence of the Macan MS. Mons. DE SCHLEGEL has asserted of these celebrated tales generally, that many, if not most of them, are plagiarized from a Sanscrit original, and that others are "intercalated" stories, taking their rise in neither India nor Arabia. Hence he concludes that the greater the number of tales, the more frequent the plagiaries and intercalations; and such being the case, "we may be assured," he says, "that the most voluminous edition of the thousand and one nights will be the worst." Without stopping to weigh the soundness of this line of argument, based on a *petitio principii*, and inducing a most inconclusive conclusion, it is worth while (the attack being so sweeping) to assume the validity of this reasoning, and prove the

strength of Mons. DE SCHLEGEL's position by examining the instances with which he supports it. If his conclusion be a true one, then the Macan MS. must be the worst instead of the best form of the thousand and one nights hitherto discovered, for it is "the most voluminous:" the first five nights in this MS. for instance, contain the matter of the first seventeen nights of GALLAND's edition, and an additional tale, entirely new, besides. In deference to so celebrated a literatist as Mons. SCHLEGEL, it is proper to consider what he advances attentively, and, keeping strictly to the letter of his arguments, to refute them, if possible, by their own assertions. It will not be perhaps difficult to show that the critic's reasons for the adoption of the above opinion are remarkable rather for ingenuity than soundness, or to prove by demonstration that the new tales of a "most voluminous" edition may bear not only the stamp of originality, but also strong internal evidence that they are indigenous to *Arabia*.

Mons. DESCHLEGEL supposes that the tales of the thousand and one nights could never have been popular with Mussulmans, owing to the multitude of supernatural beings of different kinds crowded into them, there being, he says, "scarcely another step hence to the doctrine of polytheism." In expressing this opinion, Mons. DE S. has entirely forgotten the extreme superstition of the followers of the Prophet with respect to the existence of *jinn*s, (both believers and accursed,) *ghols*, *ufreets*, and many other classes of imaginary beings, each distinguished by some peculiarity of character and habits. These are introduced in multitudes in the tales in accordance with the ordinary Arab superstitions which obtain most credit with the most bigoted Mussulmans. They are introduced with most liberality in some of the tales abounding especially in the expressions of religious feeling, and the believing spirits invariably make use of the ordinary devotional phrases so constantly in the mouth of an Arab. They are introduced not on the *dignus vindice nodus* principle as what Mons. DE S. calls "semi-deities;" they take part in the action of the story, and from their stupidity are the butts of the superior intelligence of men. So far from showing marks of transmutation to an Arab shape from a heathen original, they appear to be themselves the surest proofs of the Arabian extraction of the stories they figure in. Mons. DE S.'s determination to prove the Indian origin of many of the tales has led him to the singular supposition that a people whose manners they faithfully depict, and whose superstitions they embody, that a people whose very language bears testimony to their passion for fiction, (the same word being employed in Arabic

to express *conversation* and *the relation of stories*) would neglect such tales even though indigenous to their fatherland because the excess of supernatural agency in them savoured of "polytheism!"

With reference, however, to the objection by Mons. DE S. on the point of plagiarised tales, and his attempt to prove the plagiary by anachronisms, an expression in the story of the fisherman and the jinn in the Macan MS. may be cited, not inopportunately, as giving some index to the date at which it was originally composed. The jinn is described as having been shut in a jar for "*one thousand and eight hundred years*" from the time of SOLOMON, the son of DAVID. Now this tale with one of Mons. DE S.'s "*semi-deities*" in it, whom he supposes importations into *Arabia* from an idolatrous source, and abominations in the eyes of orthodox Mussulmans, was by the above account composed during the third century of the Hejira, at the very height of Mussulman orthodoxy.

Arguing on the supposition of the transmutation of most of the tales from heathen originals, Mons. DE S. proceeds to point out how the Koran might have been introduced instead of the Vedas, and the name of HAROUN UL RASHEED made to supersede that of VICRAMADITYA; and with reference to the introduction of that Khalif's name, he cites the expression in the commencement of the thousand and one nights, "the chronicles of the Sassanians" as constituting a palpable anachronism. Now the expression quoted does not exist in the Macan MS.: the words are *a king among kings descended from the dynasty of Sassan*; and the mention of Islamism among descendants from Sassanian princes does not appear to be in any way anachronous. Again, Mons. DE S. has ingeniously discovered in the four colors of the fish, (vide the tale of the fisherman) who in their natural shape were a population of Christians, Jews, Mussulmans, and Idolaters, a type of the four castes of the Hindoos; for, says he, "the metamorphosis in the original was brought about by a *jeu de mots*; *varna* in the Sanscrit signifying *colour* as well as *caste*." This will hardly hold good when we look to the Arabic wherein special mention is made of the different *religions* of the men transmuted into fish of different colors. Now the Hindus have, it is true, four principal castes, but their *religion* is a common one. Another instance on which much stress is laid by Mons. DE S. of the internal evidence of an Indian extraction offered by the tales is cited from the tale of the king and the physician. The position is this. 1. The king is poisoned by a MS. 2. Some Indian MS. are saturated with a solution of orpiment to protect them from insects. 3. No other MSS. are

so saturated. 4. This was, therefore, an Indian MS. thus prepared. 5. This was, therefore, an Indian king. 6. This was, therefore, an Indian story. The answer to this somewhat illogical sortie is—1. That an Indian king turning over an Indian MS. would not, as did the king in the story, have exposed himself to the chance of being poisoned. 2. That the supposition of the MS. being an ordinary Indian MS. would utterly take away the moral of the tale. 3. That (as the tale tells us) the supposed MS. was no MS. at all, for “the king turned over six leaves, and looked upon them, *and found nothing written upon them,*” which induces a further search into the book, and a more certain death in consequence. But perhaps a literal translation of the latter part of the story from the Arabic of the Macan MS. will best show the futility of Mons. DE S.’s argument, the moral of the tale being the retribution inflicted by the victim on the oppressor by means of the knowledge he is in the commencement said to possess of “all modes of healing, *and of hurting.*”

Extract from the Story of the Physician and the King.

“And after this the executioner stepped forward, and rolled his eyes fiercely, and drew his sword, and said, ‘Give the word;’ and the physician wept, and said to the king, ‘Spare me, spare me, for the love of God, and kill me not, or God will kill thee,’ and commenced extemporaneously reciting,

‘If I live no man I’ll profit; if I perish curse for me
All the good, when I’m no more, with every curse of infamy.
‘I was kindly; others cruel; they were prosperous; I lost all;
And benevolence hath made me master of a ruined hall*.’

Then said the physician to the king, ‘This is the return I meet from you; you return me the reward of the crocodile.’ Then said the king, ‘And what is the tale of the crocodile?’ The physician replied, ‘It is not possible for me to tell it, and I in this state; and as God is with you, spare me as God will spare you.’ So then the physician wept with exceeding weeping, and certain of the king’s private attendants arose, and said, ‘Oh! king, grant us the life of this physician, for we have not seen him commit one fault towards you, and we have not seen him save as healing you from your disease, which baffled all physicians and men of science.’ Then said the king to them, ‘You know not the cause of my putting to death this physician and this it is, that if I spare him, surely I myself am doomed

إذا عشت لم أنصح وإن مت فاعذو*
ذو مي البضم من بعد مي بكل لسان
نصحت فلم افلح و خانوا فافلحوا
و اورثني نصحي لدار هو ان

to death without a doubt, for by healing me of the disease which I had by something held in the hand, surely it is possible he may slay me with something given me to smell ; hence I fear lest he kill me, and take a bribe for doing it ; since he is a spy, and has come hither for no end but to compass my death ; so there is no help for it,—die he must, and after that I shall be assured of my own life.’ Then said the physician, ‘ Spare me, spare me, for the love of God, and kill me not, or God will kill you.’ Now when the physician, Oh ufreet, knew for certain that the king would put him to death without a doubt, he said to him, ‘ Oh king, if there is no help for it, but that I must die, then grant me a space that I may go down to my house, and appoint my people and my kindred where they may bury me, and that I may relieve my soul from its obligations, and distribute my books of medicine. And I have a book, rarest of the rare ; I offer it to you as an offering ; keep it as treasure in your treasury.’ Then said the king to the physician, ‘ What is in this book ?’ He replied, ‘ Things countless beyond the power of computation ; and as a small portion of the secrets that are in it, if you directly after you cut off my head open three leaves of it, and read three lines of the page on your left hand, then the head will speak with you, and give you answers to every question which you ask it.’ So the king wondered with exceeding wonder and shrugged with satisfaction and said, ‘ Oh physician, what ! directly I cut off your head will you speak to me ?’ He answered, ‘ Even so, O king.’ So replied the king, ‘ This is a strange matter,’ and forthwith sent him away closely surrounded by a guard ; and the physician went down to his house, and performed all his obligations on that day, and on the next day he went up to the king’s hall of audience ; and the umeers and ministers and chamberlains and deputies in office and the supporters of the state went up also, the whole of them, and the presence chamber was as a flower bed of the garden : and lo ! the physician came up into the presence chamber and stood before the king surrounded by guards, and with him he had an old volume, and a bottle for holding antimony, and in it a powder : and he sat down and said, ‘ Give me a charger,’ and they gave him a charger ; and he poured the powder upon it, and spread it out, and said, ‘ Oh king, take this book and open it not until you have cut off my head, and immediately you have cut it off, place it on this charger, and order its being thrown upon that powder, and directly you have done that, the blood will stop flowing ; then open the book.’ So the king gave orders for the cutting off the physician’s head and took the book ; and the executioner arose, and struck the physician’s neck with the sword, and placed the head in the middle of the charger, and threw it upon the powder, then the blood stopped flowing, and the physician Dooban opened his eyes, and said, ‘ Open the book, O king ;’ so the king opened the book, and found the leaves stuck together, so he put his finger to his mouth, and moistened it with his tongue and opened the first leaf, and the second, and the third, and each leaf did not open but with much trouble ; so the king turned over six leaves and looked upon them, and found nothing written upon them.

Then said the king, ' O physician, there is nothing written upon these ;' and the physician replied, ' Turn over more still ;' so he turned over three more, and there had but a short space elapsed before the drugs penetrated his system at one time and on the instant, for the book was poisoned, and forthwith the king began to be convulsed, and cried out, and said, ' The poison has penetrated me,' and the head of the physician Dooban began to repeat extemporaneously,

' They issued savage mandates, but not long
Survived they in their cruelty, for lo !
'Twas but a little, and the mandate was not.
Had they done justice, justice were done them—
But they did ill, and evil was their portion ;
And fortune turned against them, strongly armed
With acts of woe and trouble. Thus they passed hence,
And the mute eloquence of their condition
Repeated to them, " This is your reward.—
Blame not the retribution!" '

(So goes the tale) ; so when the physician's head finished its speech, the king fell down on the instant a dead corpse."

The above extract will give some idea of the literal style of a tale so popular under GALLAND's paraphrase, but expressed in the Macan MS. (as will be observed on comparison) much more in detail, and more graphically.

There remains now but to allude to Mons. DE SCHLEGEL's remaining assertion, that the more voluminous the edition of the thousand and one nights the worse will it be. The best reply to this will be the citation of a new tale forming part of the recital of the fourth night in the Macan MS. It offers a fair occasion for the formation of a judgment on Mons. DE S.'s sweeping assertion, for it has never been found save in this voluminous edition, and is now translated of course for the first time.

The Story of the King Sundabad.

" It is said that there was a king among the kings of Fars, who was fond of sport, and of exercise, and of hunting, and of trapping game, and he had always a certain hawk near him, which he let not be separated from him by night nor by day ; and all night long he had it sitting on his hand, and whenever he rose up to hunt he took the bird with him. And he made for it a cup of gold hung round its neck, to give it to drink out of. Now it fell out as the king was sitting, behold the chief falconer began to say, ' Oh ! king of the age, these are the days for going forth to hunt.' Then the king ordered that they should set forth, and took the hawk on his hand ; and they journeyed till they arrived at an open plain, and they

struck out the circle for the battu, and forthwith a doe antelope came within the circle. Then said the king, 'Over whose head the antelope shall leap and get away, that man will I kill.' Then they narrowed the circle of the battu about it, and, behold, the antelope came before the king's station and stood firm on its hind legs, and gathered in its fore feet to its breast, as if about to kiss the earth before the king; so the king bowed his head in acknowledgment to the antelope; then it bounded over his head, and took the way of the desert. Now it happened that the king saw his attendants winking and pointing at him, so he said, 'Ho! vuzeer, what are my attendants saying?' The vuzeer replied, 'They say you proclaimed that over the head of whomsoever the antelope should leap, that man shall be put to death.' Then said the king, 'By the life of my head, surely I will follow her up till I reach her;' so the king set forth in pursuit of the antelope, and gave not over following her till she reached a hill among the mountains. Then the antelope made as she would cross a ravine, so the king cast off his hawk at her; and the bird drove its talons into her eyes, to blind and bewilder her, and the king threw his mace at her and struck her so as to roll her over. Then he dismounted, and cut her throat and flayed her, and hung the carcass to the pommel of his saddle. Now it was the time for the mid-day sleep, and the plain was parched and dry, nor was water to be met with in it; and the king was thirsty, and his horse also; so he went about searching for water, and he saw a tree dropping water, as it were clarified butter. Now the king wore gloves of the hide of a beast of prey, and he took the cup from the hawk's neck, and filled it with that water, and set down the water before the bird, and lo! the hawk struck the cup with its talons, and overturned it. So the king took the cup a second time, and caught the drops of water as they were falling until he filled it, for he thought the hawk was thirsty; so he set the cup before it, but she struck it with her talons and upset it. Then the king was annoyed with the hawk, and got up a third time, and filled the cup, and put it before his horse, but the hawk overturned it with its wings; then said the king, 'The Lord take you, you unluckiest of birds! you keep me from drinking, and keep yourself from drinking, and keep the horse from drinking!' So he struck the hawk with his sword, and cut off its wing, but the hawk began lifting up its head, and saying by signs, 'Look at what is beneath the tree.' Then the king lifted up his eyes, and saw below the tree a young snake, a poisonous one, and this which was dropping from the tree was its poison. Then the king repented him of having cut off the hawk's wing, and arose and mounted his horse and went, taking with him the antelope's carcass until he arrived at his tent within the hour, and he gave the antelope to the cook, and said to him, 'Take, and make this ready.' So the king sat down in his chair, and the hawk on his hand, and the bird struggled gaspingly, and died. Then the king cried out, wailing and lamenting for having slain the hawk, and it was the cause of saving him from death! And this is what occurred in the story of the king *Sundabad*."

The above short tale is valuable as answering more than one of Mons. DE S.'s arguments. It contains instances of the same power of description and habit of close observation which form the principal charm of the known tales. Any one who has been in the custom of watching the antelope, or observing the natural motions of the hawk, will recognise the action of the one and the other faithfully described in the attitudes common to them when scared or excited. The mention too of *hawking the antelope* proves the story to be purely Arabian: no other nation but the Arab using the hawk against large animals. The Persian hawks the hare, but only the Arab flies his bird at the antelope. Thus then, so far from the additions to the "most voluminous" edition being the cause of its deterioration, as unnaturally adapted from foreign sources to Arab manners, the very first of those additions is found to be a spirited tale describing graphically and naturally the progress of passion, (excited originally by a trifle, and ending in the blind commission of an act of ingratitude) and giving indisputable evidence of an Arab origin.

The judgment of those infinitely better qualified than myself to pronounce on the merits of the Macan MS. is, it is submitted, fully supported by the result of this brief inquiry. The translation having been made literally from the Arabic, this will account for a singularity of expression which may be displeasing to most readers. In undertaking to introduce the new tales to the English reader, I would be glad to avail myself of opinions upon the expediency of holding to this style of translation, or adopting one more consonant with European idioms.

[NOTE.—As far as we may be allowed to be capable of judging on such a point, we think our correspondent's style of expression is particularly felicitous and suitable to the work, of which we are happy to see this public acknowledgment of his having undertaken the translation.

We had rather that the stories should retain the terseness, the simplicity, the very turns of expression as well as of idea so peculiar to the language as to the literature of Arabia, than that they should be dressed up in the uncongenial disguise of modern idiom however elegant. There is at the same time nothing, in the style adopted, repugnant to our ears, already familiar from childhood with the oriental phraseology of the translated scriptures:—but, on the contrary, the total foreignness and antiquity of the incidents and reflections, and the admixture of the supernatural, now discarded from our own works of fiction, seem to acquire support and harmony from a corresponding style of diction. We need only refer the reader to the parallel passages quoted in the *Minute on the Macan MS.* by Dr. MILL (vol. V. page 598) to prove the great superiority of tone and keeping, as an artist would say, in the strict dry nervous copy of the original, as contrasted with the smoothened, mannerized, and totally Frenchified, though in many respects pleasing, picture of M. TREBUTIEN.—ED.]